

Meet New Regional Administrator Denise Gonzales

Energetic, mother of four children (three teenagers), Illinois girl, foster parent...these are just a few of the words that describe the newly appointed Regional Administrator, Denise Gonzales.

While still in the early days of her new appointment, Denise was proud to say that she was an "Illinois Girl." She was born in Illinois and has lived here all her life. So far that life has involved an active and demanding professional career and the responsibilities and joys of raising four children, three of whom are in high school.

Denise sees a great deal of travel in her future and most of it will be within the Northern Region. She looks forward to meeting as many of the foster parents as possible. She also is an experienced foster parent. When her children were young she fostered teenagers, but has also cared for several younger children.



*Regional Administrator
Denise Gonzales*

While fostering, she often worked very closely with the birth parents in preparing them for the return of their children. She continues to have contact with many of her previous foster children and their families. Denise has experienced and fully believes in the teamwork approach that is needed to work with our children and families.

Denise started her career in social services working for a private agency doing crisis intervention and working with foster care. She joined the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services in 1987 as a Child Protection Investigator. In 1995, she became an investigations supervisor. Denise is very proud that in 1998 she became the site administrator in the Rock Island Office and had the opportunity to implement the "Paired-Team" model. This model is currently being replicated throughout the downstate regions. The "Paired-Team" model has one supervisor responsible for a team that includes both investigative and permanency staff so that cases can be better coordinated.

For the past two years, Denise had been Special Assistant to Director Jess McDonald and worked at implementing Paired-Team in the Central and Southern Regions, along with a variety of other assignments. She now looks forward to implementing the Paired-Team model throughout the Northern Region while serving as Regional Administrator.

Her experience in foster care and her professional successes should be a true benefit to her new role. Those qualities along with her evident enthusiasm and energy will serve the Northern Region well as she jumps right into her new responsibilities on behalf of children and families.

Foster mom helps a teen find high school and college success

When Quinika came into De Pearson's home in September of 1999 she was 15 years old. She was frustrated with many family issues, resulting in low self-esteem, little self-worth and little motivation to succeed. De offered her guidance, a safe and nurturing environment with lots of love. In return, De witnessed a caterpillar turn into a butterfly. Quinika became confident, motivated and very determined to succeed.



Teen scholar, Quinika

Quinika graduated with honors from Harlem High School and is now attending Northern Illinois University (NIU), majoring in Sociology with an emphasis in criminology and a minor in political science. While attending Harlem High Quinika received such awards as Youth Academic/Athletic Achievement Award, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Scholarship, Machesney Park Rotary Club Senior "Strive" Scholarship, DCFS Scholarship and the NIC-9 Scholar Athlete-4 years. She maintained all A's and B's and still participated in Track & Field, winning many school and conference awards.

Quinika states that she loves learning, which is why she is continuing her education at NIU. She plans on becoming a successful attorney so that she can help someone who is in the same situation she has been in the past. Quinika says that she has learned that "you have to set goals and stay focused on accomplishing them, because the only thing that can hold you back is yourself, you have the choice of which life path to take."

"I have overcome so many obstacles in my life, turning them into stepping stones to victory and maturity," she shares. She is also thankful for all the love and support from her aunt and her foster mom, De Pearson, because without them she says she doesn't know where she would be.

Northern News

Sponsor

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Call with foster parent association news and schedules; local training; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and news articles and support all foster families can use.

Practice precaution when using fireplaces

Take the following precautions before you use your fireplace:

- Move all materials that burn easily away from the furnace, including old rags, sawdust, wood scraps and flammable liquids such as gasoline and kerosene.
- Have a professional inspect your chimney and flue at least once a year and clean them if necessary.
- Only burn materials designed for a fireplace.
- Always use a fireplace screen to prevent hot embers from popping out into the room.
- Do not go to bed or leave the house until you are sure the fire is completely out. Securely shut the fireplace screen or doors.
- Put ashes in a metal container and empty it after each time you clean the fireplace.
- Install smoke detectors on every level of the home. Test the alarms periodically and change the batteries at least once a year.

Kankakee Task Force holds picture-perfect party for families

After a year of struggling to find just the right avenue to help promote the retention and recruitment of foster and adoptive families, the Community Task Force of Kankakee County finally saw its opportunity. The group invited families that had recently adopted to pose for a giant family picture.

Plans started in the fall in anticipation of National Adoption Awareness Month in November. Through discussion it was revealed that several families were retiring their licenses after the completion of their adoptions. This seemed like the perfect time to wish them good fortune and a good way to show the community that DCFS does have success stories to tell.

These adoptions were more than an achievement for the families, because they spoke highly for the local area as well. Many of these families shared how they had been supported by their church, social agencies and neighborhoods, reinforcing the philosophy that “it takes a village to raise a child.”

To make this a true community event, the task force contacted local churches for space to stage the group photo. Trinity Lutheran Church opened its doors, and made a beautiful background for the photo. The task force invited Judge Susan Tungate, who is currently the local magistrate presiding over adoptions in Kankakee County to be a guest.

At 4:30 on Tuesday, November 12th, 10 families comprised of 35 people strolled into the church ready for the picture. But while setting up, the kids began asking, “where’s the Judge?” When she happened to walk in a few minutes later, an unlikely announcement rang out, “Here comes the Judge!” The children cheered and greeted her with enthusiasm.

Following the photo, the families came back to the DCFS office for a reception also arranged by the task force, with food donated by Cakes and Lace of St. Anne and Festival Foods of Bradley.

The momentum of the event did not end with the fun of the reception. The local newspaper is planning articles on several foster/adoptive families and a radio station is going to run a public service announcement about adoption. Thanks to the adoptive families and the work of the Community Task Force, the news about the joys of adoption can reach more people in the Kankakee area.

Hispanic Heritage Fest Parade helps recruit more diverse families

Members of the Elgin Field Office, along with family and friends participated in Elgin’s fourth annual Hispanic Heritage Fest Parade, 2002. The event featured entertainment for the whole family including food, music, dancing, a salsa making contest and activities for children. This was a great opportunity for the Department to recruit Spanish speaking foster parents as Elgin boasts one of the fastest growing Hispanic populations in Illinois. The diversity in the Elgin community is also reflected in the Elgin Field Office where a third of the office has emigrated from various countries. We invite all the foster parents and staff to participate in next year’s parade!



Northern Region Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children* (Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 3 - *Addressing Developmental Issues Related to Sexuality* (One 3-hour session = 3 training hours)

Module 4 - *Responding to the Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 5 - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 7 - *Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 8 - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 9 - *Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 10 - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

College of DuPage Area
630-942-2392

Rock Valley Area
815-874-3000

Module

ELGIN - Crowne Plaza Hotel

March 3 (Mon) and 6:30-9:30 p.m. 6
March 8 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

GLEN ELLYN - College of DuPage

March 5 (Wed) and 6:30-9:30 p.m. 2
March 8 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

KANKAKEE/BOURBONNAIS - Lees Inn

March 18 (Tues) and 6:30-9:30 p.m. 8
March 22 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

WAUKEGAN - Ramada Inn

February 26 (Wed) and 6:30-9:30 p.m. 4
March 1 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Other In-Service Trainings

Transcultural Parenting Training

ROCKFORD - TBA

March 12, 19 & 26 (Wed) 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

CPR Training

DEKALB - DCFS

March 19 (Wed) 6:00-10:00 p.m.

ROCKFORD - TBA

March 5 (Wed) 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
March 5 (Wed) 6:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

College of DuPage Area
630-942-2392

Rock Valley Area
815-874-3000

AURORA - Comfort Suites City Center

March 22 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

CRYSTAL LAKE - Country Inn & Suites

March 22 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

GLEN ELLYN - College of DuPage

March 8 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

JOLIET/ROMEOVILLE - Country Inn

March 1 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

KANKAKEE/BOURBONNAIS - Lees Inn

March 13 & 20 (Thurs) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

WAUKEGAN - Ramada Inn

March 15 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

DEKALB

March 1 (Sat) 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

ROCKFORD - The Bell Building

March 29 & April 5 (Sat) 1:00-4:00 p.m.

**Pre-registration is
required for all classes!
Call the number listed
for your area.**

There's a hole in my sidewalk

*Autobiography
In Five Short Chapters*

I.

I walk down the street
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost...I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

II.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in
this same place.
But, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in...it's a habit...but,
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V.

I walk down another street.

